



THE ASUO SENATE PRESIDENT

A COMMUNICATION

MARCH 22nd, 2025

Chair Lieber, Chair Sanchez, and members of the committee,

My name is Taliek Lopez-DuBoff, and I am a student at the University of Oregon, where I serve as the Senate President in student government (ASUO). Originally from senate district 18. In this role, I connect with my peers daily to better understand the challenges we face and advocate for the students I represent. Today, I am here both as a student and a student leader to urge you to stand with students across our state by making critical investments in higher education.

First, we need \$1.275 billion for the Public University Support Fund and \$920 million for the Community College Support Fund to keep tuition affordable and maintain the quality of our academic programs. The Public University Support Fund is the primary source of state funding for Oregon's seven public universities, covering faculty and staff salaries, student services, and campus resources. Decades of underfunding have shifted the financial burden on students and families. Thirty years ago, the state covered more than 60% of public university operating costs; today, it covers less than 30%. As a result, Oregon's public universities are now among the lowest-funded in the nation on a per-student basis while having some of the highest tuition rates in the West. Investing \$1.275 billion in the Public University Support Fund will help strengthen student services, reduce costs for students, and stabilize our universities, ensuring that Oregon remains competitive in workforce development and economic growth.

Second, we need \$450 million for the Oregon Opportunity Grant, which provides financial aid to low- and moderate-income students, including DACA recipients. Oregon currently lags behind neighboring states in per-student university funding, making state investment in financial aid critical. Increased funding for the Oregon Opportunity Grant will help remove financial barriers, boosting college enrollment and completion rates. Last session, the Legislature made a record investment in this grant program, and we must continue that momentum by adding an additional \$150 million for the 2025-2027 biennium.

As part of my work, I collaborate closely with Julia Morrill, our Benefits Navigator. My job is to ensure her department has the resources it needs to support students effectively. I want to thank you for restoring \$5 million to fund benefits navigator positions at all 17 community colleges and seven public universities.

However, we must do more to ensure students have the resources they need to succeed. Finally, we need \$22 million for the Basic Needs Package (House Bills 3182 and 3183) to provide critical support such as housing and food assistance. Students cannot focus on their education if they are struggling to afford basic necessities. We need to move beyond temporary fixes and take meaningful steps to ensure that every Oregon college student, regardless of background, income, or location, has access to the resources they need to stay enrolled and graduate.

Students around the country are being attacked and Investing in higher education is not just about supporting students, it is an investment in Oregon's future workforce and economic success. The students sitting in college classrooms today will become the teachers, engineers, healthcare professionals, and business leaders of tomorrow. By making college more accessible and affordable, we are ensuring that our state has a well-educated, highly skilled workforce that can drive innovation, attract businesses, and strengthen Oregon's economy. If we fail to invest in higher education, we risk losing talented students to states that offer more financial support, ultimately weakening our workforce and limiting economic growth.

I understand that college students may not make up a large part of Oregon's population, but we do make up a large part of its future. I urge you to stand with students and provide the support we need to succeed. Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to testify today.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Taliek Lopez-DuBoff". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Taliek Lopez-DuBoff
Senate President
Associated Students of the University of Oregon